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ABSTRACT

A study analyzed the decision making process of a dual-career married couple debating whether they should relocate for his or her career. Their interaction was examined and interpreted through multiple components of conversational context, such as institutional constraints influencing the couple, their shared knowledge and perceptions, the structure of their conversation, and their language. The conversation analysis was compared with the couple's own description of their relationship and decision making process. Results showed that while they described themselves as equal partners in decision making, the analysis suggested that the husband tended to exert more influence over the conversations and the decisions and the wife tended to keep the conversation balanced and to give in where decisions were concerned. Reasons for the discrepancy between their perceptions of their behavior and their actual behavior include the husband's need to control the situation and the wife's collaboration with him, and the wife's need for the husband to "take charge," indicating that "openness" and honesty may be poor predictors of satisfaction in a relationship. (HTH)

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MARITAL DECISION MAKING: A LANGUAGE-ACTION ANALYSIS

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MARITAL DECISION MAKING: A LANGUAGE-ACTION ANALYSIS

ABSTRACT

This study of marital decision making focuses upon a dual career couple making a marital-career decision: whether they should relocate for his or her career. A language-action model identifies multiple components of conversational context, such as institutional constraints impacting on the couple, their shared knowledge, and the form or structure of their conversation. Through the interface of these components the conversation is interpreted. The conversation analysis is compared with the couple's own description of their decision making. They describe themselves as equal partners in decision making, while the analysis suggests the husband tends to exert more influence and the wife to give in. Some reasons for this discrepancy between their behavior and perceptions of their behavior are identified and the implications explored.

MARITAL DECISION MAKING: A LANGUAGE-ACTION ANALYSIS[1]

Rose: It went back and forth. I knew Cal wasn't going to be happy with it [her job offer]. Because he'd already settled on his job. And going back East was going away from family and everything we knew . . . . I called him up Friday and said, 'This is the way it went; it's a fantastic opportunity for me; think about it.' We both got off the phone where there was dead silence. We didn't think this was going to happen . . . .

(Tape of couple's conversation.)

Cal and Rose are a young dual-career couple facing a crucial career decision--whether to relocate for his career or hers. Throughout their relationships, such intimate couples make decisions ranging from mundane to profound, from deciding a dinner menu to choosing careers. In this study couples' decision making is investigated by examining the process by which Cal and Rose resolve their career conflict. A holistic analysis is conducted through the use of a qualitative language-action model, and a comparison of the analysis with the couple's ethnographic description of decision making is made.

In the paper a brief discussion of decision making, and a description of the couple and their decision are presented, a language-action paradigm is described and applied to the couple's communication and the results of the analysis are compared with the couple's ethnography. Decision making processes within the couple's conversations are identified and explained.

Demographic information and satisfaction measures also help account for their behavior. The analysis provides as full a picture as possible of this couple's decision making.

Decision Making

Previous research on decision making in couples, families and small groups has used a variety of methods. These include outcome assessment methods,[2] bargaining and negotiation,[3] game theory analysis,[4] and quantitative interaction analysis.[5]

Another approach to the study of decision making involves qualitative interaction analysis. As in the quantitative interactional approaches, communication is the focus of analysis; however, rather than categorizing speech acts and counting their frequencies, the text of the discussion is interpreted. In qualitative analysis large units of behavior, such as the episode (to be discussed below), are examined and context is treated as an integral part of, and prevailing influence upon, the conversation. The analysis describes the conversational sequence, identifies patterns, and explains how the interactants create decisions. This divergence from more traditional approaches subordinates static, empirical objectivity to a more fluid, empirical, reflective, nonreductive interpretation. Yet, the qualitative method does not emphasize "subjectivity" to the exclusion of "objectivity"; rather it works a dialectic between the two. Rabinow and Sullivan explain the qualitative interpretive approach as refuting

> the claim that one can somehow reduce the complex world of signification to the products of self-consciousness in the traditional philosophical sense. Rather, interpretation begins from the postulate that the web of meaning constitutes human existence to such an extent that it cannot ever be

> meaningfully reduced to constitutively prior speech acts, dyadic relations, or any predefined elements. Intentionality and empathy are rather seen as dependent on the prior existence of the shared world of meaning within which the subjects of human discourse constitute themselves. It is in this literal sense that interpretive social science can be called a return to the objective world, seeing that world as in the first instance the circle of meaning within which we find ourselves and which we can never fully surpass.[6]

Of several models or quasi models for qualitative conversation analysis, many of which examine nonverbal components of communication, one of the best articulated for the analysis of verbal communication is Frentz and Farrell's language-action paradigm, which examines contextual components--institutional constraint, shared knowledge and form--as they impact on conversation.[7] The current study of marital decision making is based upon a variation of Frentz and Farrell's model. The strengths of this model lie in its holistic approach to communication: it treats context as an integral part of the communicative sequence, uses episodes rather than isolated acts as the fundamental units of communication, employs both observers' and participants' perspectives, and works to identify the patterning of logically related symbolic acts in an episode.[8] Before discussing the model and analysis in depth, the couple and their decision are described.[9]

The Couple

Cal and Rose married in June, 1979 after leaving a Western university. Both are 23 years old, Caucasian, from middle to upper-middle class families. Each has one living parent. Cal is making up an Incomplete in order to receive a B.S. in computer science, and Rose is completing her thesis for an M.A. in biology. While engaged they shared an apartment near the university

for approximately one year.

During the spring of 1979 both sought jobs in their respective professions. Cal received the first offer, from a Northern California firm, and accepted with Rose's approval. Soon after, Rose went on a job interview in New Jersey, ostensibly for the practice. The interview turned into a job offer that Rose said, "I couldn't refuse." The couple then had to decide whether Rose should accept the job, a better one than she had hoped she could find, or give it up. The career decision (discussed in more detail below) is one which many dual-career couples must face.[10]

During this period my research assistant, a friend of the couple, was present in the couple's apartment on two separate days for several hours, taping their conversation. The recorder was unobtrusively placed and turned on while the couple went about their normal activities. The tapes of spontaneous conversation include candid discussion of the career decision. The couple also completed satisfaction scales, provided demographic information, and answered questions about their decision-making on paper and on tape after the taping of conversation. They had been recruited to participate in a study of family communication, but were unaware of the focus upon decision making.

About a year later I sent the couple a follow-up letter asking them to respond to several questions on tape about the career decision (already made by now), and their general decision making, and again they completed questionnaires. These tapes show extended responses to the questions, and spontaneous conversation. Cal and Rose both now reside and work in Northern California; she is a biological research lab director; he is a system analyst. The resulting tapes inform us about the couple, their perceptions of themselves and their decision making, and reveal examples of their communicative processes. In other words, the tapes reflect both a direct example of the

couple communicating, and an ethnography or metaperspective of their talking about how they talk.

The Decision

Cal and Rose's decision about accepting the job in New Jersey had far-reaching implications for Rose, Cal and their marriage. They identified several options: both go to New Jersey, both stay in California, or live apart. At one point they considered the possibility of Rose's accepting the New Jersey job, but delaying the start. Cal and Rose would go to Northern California for six months, while Cal applied for jobs in New Jersey; then they would both go to New Jersey.

The decision's gravity is best expressed in the couple's descriptions of the situation taken from an interview recorded in May 1979. During the interview the research assistant asked Rose how she and Cal reacted when she returned from New Jersey with a job offer.

Rose: It went back and forth. I knew Cal wasn't going to be happy with it. Because he'd already settled on his job. And going back East was going away from family and everything we knew. To me that's exciting cuz that's what I've wanted to do. It was a case where I don't want to make Cal totally unhappy--then he's bitchy to live with. I called him up Friday and said, "This is the way it went; it's a fantastic opportunity for me; think about it." We both got off the phone where there was dead silence. We didn't think this was going to happen. In a way, at first Cal was real defensive. Kind of like, "What are you doing?" Which I fully expected; he'd already accepted a job and everything. I'd been back there; he hadn't seen it. All he'd heard about from family was how bad New Jersey was, how

bad the whole east coast was. I just laid it on him that yes, I was very interested in this position, and let him think about it. And the whole rest of the time I sat down and planned out real logically how I was going to approach it. We sat down and talked. There was a lot of, "Well, are you sure you can't get a position out in California?" And I went over the major advantages of the company over other pharmaceutical companies. I got to the point where I said, "It's a fantastic opportunity and I really don't want to turn it down." I may still have to if the company won't go along with our compromise. (1979)

Cal's response to the same question follows:

Cal: I wanted, because I'd commited myself to [a company in California] I wanted to stay . . . in the Bay Area. I don't like the idea of leaving for New Jersey with absolutely nothing in my pocket. I'd rather start fresh in an area I'm familiar with. But on the other hand there was Rose's career and we threw every possible idea out on the floor. What happens if Rose took the job and we were separated for eight months? What would happen if she didn't take the job; was there something else she could find? What would happen if I turned [my company] down and just went? (1979)

In attempting to create a "picture" of this couple and their decision making, a model was sought which would capture more than an isolated snapshot. The couple's background, the tensions and pressures they were experiencing, and the unique strengths and weaknesses of their relationship were objects of study. The decision making could not be divorced of context. The investigator also tried to get a sense of the couple's communication rhythm or pattern from the data, and of their own impressions of these

patterns. The language-action model with its emphases on context and pattern, and its participant/observer perspectives, provides the best framework for building a holistic, fluid representation of the couple.

Language-Action Paradigm

The language-action paradigm as described by Frentz and Farrell contains three hierarchically ordered constructs: context, the larger picture incorporating the interpersonal environment; episodes, or topical communicative sequences; and symbolic acts, the basic constitutive communication units. In applying a version of the language-action model to Cal and Rose's conversations, each overall sequence of communication (from the 1979 and 1980 tapings) is divided into speech acts and topical episodes. Episodes and their symbolic speech acts provide information about the context, and the constitution and interpretation of episodes and speech acts is simultaneously influenced by context.

The fundamental unit of meaning in the analysis is the speech act or symbolic act, defined here as a thought unit. Symbolic acts have relevance as constituents of episodes, and the patterns or forms of interrelationship of symbolic acts are linked and interpreted through "episodic force," which is the overall sequential structure of the episode which informs the meaning given the symbolic act.[11]

Episode is one of the most elusive terms in the analysis of conversation. A definition which helps delineate episode while illustrating why the concept is so slippery is provided by Forgas. Episodes are

> cognitive representations of stereotypical interaction sequences, which are representative of a given cultural environment. Such interaction sequences constitute natural units in the stream of behavior, distinguishable

> on the basis of symbolic, temporal, and often physical boundaries.[12]

In this study the conversations are divided into episodes on the basis of topic shifts. An episode, in general, is constituted by symbolic acts in sequence centering around a single topic, often identified after the episode has begun. Topic shifts signal the beginning of a new episode; the initiation point can usually be reconstructed once the new topic surfaces.[12] There is a hierarchical relationship among subtopics, episodes, and the overall conversations, and to a certain extent the boundaries are subjective. The best the researcher can accomplish is consistency in identifying symbolic, temporal and physical boundaries of episodes.

Three elements of context are defined and analyzed for information they provide about the decision-making process: 1) shared relational rules relevant to the situation; 2) institutional constraints, rules "imposed" by contemporary institutions, i.e., marriage, career, family, money; 3) form or structure of the communication patterns for the conversations, e.g., problem-reassurance, proposal-extension, topic shift. These categories of context (discussed in detail below) are derived from those Frentz and Farrell have labeled epistemic, institutional, and aesthetic forms of life, and constitute a basic part of context.

The study of speech acts, episodes, and contexts permits addressing the following research questions:

> Does the couple's description and perceived shared knowledge of their decision making and relationship correspond to their observed decision making form and marital adjustment measures:
>
> What institutional constraints emerge from the couple's spontaneous conversation; how do these compare with those

the couple says are/were important considerations?

The Analysis

The analysis centers upon Cal and Rose's conversations dealing primarily with their decision about which jobs to accept. The purpose is to create a full picture of their decision making processes in order to answer the research questions. The couple's assessment of their own behavior and relationship as revealed through their statements about institutional constraints, shared knowledge, decision making form and their responses to adjustment scales is compared to the information and form they reveal in their actual communication, both one to one and to a third party.[14]

Institutional constraints are studied by examining episodes for recurrent themes and topics comprising speech acts and identified as major concerns or obstacles to the decision. Episodes are also scrutinized for evidence of the couple's mutual possession of both information and values. The couple's expressed descriptions of the context, past episodes, their decision making, and relationship are sought in the transcripts. This shared knowledge can be inferred when one partner gives information or opinion in the presence of the other, and the other acknowledges receipt or prior knowledge of that information. Form is analyzed primarily from categorization of speech acts and observed relationships among categories. Structures emerge from the data by virtue of their recurrence or redundancy. This part of the analysis verifies the utility of the L-A model in pinpointing aspects of the conversations that inform us of the nature of the couple's relationship and of their decision making process.

In seeking to bring the reader into as complete contact as possible with the data without reprinting the entire transcripts, examples from the conversations which represent redundant patterns are presented to support the analysis.

Questionnaire and interview data are also available as "evidence." The analysis begins with separate consideration of institutional constraints, shared knowledge and form.

1. Institutional constraints. The most readily observable components of context are institutional constraints. They are often directly stated in the dialogue or can be inferred from the conversation. The transcript was combed for signs of obstacles, rules, or constraints "imposed" by society upon the couple (one could argue that the couple imposes the constraints upon themselves in choosing to observe these social rules). In this section some of the constraints are listed and examples from the transcripts are provided to show how a constraint may operate in the decision making of this couple. From the 1979 transcript excerpts show constraints raised in the actual decision making; examples from the 1980 transcript show the couple's post hoc reconstruction of their reasoning. Those constraints listed are not exhaustive of all the institutional constraints operating. However, the list represents those identified through the couple's words, as important considerations in their decision to stay in California.

The primary institutional constraints upon the couple's career decisions involve: 1) money - they wanted to maximize their salaries while controlling expenses; they believe the cost of living is higher on the east coast than the west; 2) life style - they believe the pace is faster in the East, people are less friendly there and have different values; there are more problems and crime in the East; 3) family - they were concerned that their parents approve of and support their plans. They didn't want to create disharmony; 4) career opportunities and advancement - they are concerned for themselves and each other that their careers progress. They wanted their jobs to be fulfilling and to lead to better positions and opportunities.

These excerpts show the couple raising financial issues in trying to make their decision.

Cal: You know, Rose, from the looks of apartments in the Bay Area, we could find a very nice one for 325 or 350.

Rose: You think so?

Cal: Ya, look at this.

Rose: That's probably cheaper than New Jersey. (1979)

These episode segments show the concern about the financial impact that a move to New Jersey would have had upon the couple from their perspective. These excerpts made post decision, show their reconstructed reasoning; money is a recurring issue in the 1980 transcript.[15]

Rose: The other thing that I really did think about quite a bit, was the difference in heating costs and clothing costs, and all. (1980)

- - - - -

Rose: And probably Cal would of had to take a cut in pay going back East . . . . (1980)

- - - - -

Rose: The cost of living is somewhere between a quarter and a third higher back there. (1980)

From a 1980 episode about why the couple did not move to New Jersey, I have chosen representative subepisodes concerning their lifestyle considerations. Again, these are reconstructed arguments. This concern was not as evident in the 1979 transcript.

Rose: I got very accustomed to wearing casual clothes in California, and I can still wear them now and I like that. I know Cal does, too, and in his field back East, I would imagine he would have to be wearing sport coats and ties to work. (1980)

- - - - -

Cal: Yeah, and I don't know, it's just that the lifestyle of California that I've grown very accustomed to; if I want to do something, I can do it; I don't have to worry too much about the neighbors, or my boss, or what other people are gonna say. They don't really judge people out here by that. Whereas, I've heard stories of back East =

Rose: = Where you fit into a niche, or forget it.

Cal: Yeah, and if you don't fit in that niche, you're talked about and shunned in a lot of ways you can't really put your finger one, but they definitely exist. (1980)

Cal and Rose's concern about their families' reactions is reflected in the next subepisodes. Note that the couple allows itself to be swayed by family concerns; thus the institution of family becomes a constraint.

Cal: Ahh, what are we gonna tell our parents?

Rose: What do ya mean?

Cal: Are we gonna tell 'em that, the truth or

Rose: [ ] I'm tellin' my mom the truth. (1979)

- - - - -

Cal: I just wonder how Dad's gonna take it.

Rose: Your dad's not gonna take it too well. (1979)

- - - - -

The couple reiterate their concerns about family a year later in explaining their decision.

Cal: When we first started talking about going to New Jersey, her mother and her family along with my family were not very well prepared for us to go back East. They wanted us ta be aroun' here.

Rose: They were negative, um, and in some ways I don't blame 'em for that . . . . (1980)

Cal and Rose are both in hot pursuit of the American dream of success and fulfillment. This is repeatedly illustrated in their 1980 discussions of career objectives. In the following subepisodes they say the potential of prospective careers was an important consideration in their decision making.

Cal: It seems that they are willing to give me as much responsibility as I want to take and I have absolutely nobody except my manager telling me what to do.

Rose: I think that was another thing that influenced my decision not to go back to New Jersey is that the job that Cal has now really has a lot of potential behind it, ah, for him working his way up faster than just a straight programmer. (1980)

- - - - -

Cal: But at the same time the job back in New Jersey, yes they would have tried to get her to publish, but maybe one paper; she would have coauthored one paper in a year or so. Where now she's already coauthored three papers and chances are by the time she's done with this project, she will have been, had her name on at least twenty papers. (1980)

Future career plans are also indirectly shown as important in the 1979 transcript as reflected in this discussion of schools.

Rose: Umm, oh, I talked to a couple of people in the bio department about Rutgers=

Cal: =About what?
[ ]

Rose: And they said it--Rutgers, the university in New Jersey=

Cal: =Oh yeah=

Rose: =And they said it, the school, was about comparable to UCSB. It's like looking at UCSB and comparing it with Stanford or Berkeley or

somewhere like that. So it's a real
[ ]
Cal: Well, now you're talking about your
field right? (1979)

Institutional constraints are influenced by and influence the couple's shared knowledge.

2. Shared knowledge. This second component of context is both easier and more difficult to pin down. Easier, because examples are evident throughout the conversation; more difficult, because it is so ubiquitous. The entire transcript serves as a record of shared knowledge between the interactants; the couple shares an incalculable amount of information. To identify all this shared knowledge is beyond the scope of the analysis. Knowledge, however, of their perceived attitudes toward their relationship, and of their perceived decision making processes is of particular interest in this study, because in contrast with observations of their relationship and decision making form, their shared knowledge gives us insight into the ways they socially construct their own realities. First let us examine their perceptions of their marriage.

Through their dialogue we find that the couple is very happily married and feels the essence of their relationship is in each one's trying to take the other's needs into consideration. Their scores on the Spanier Dyadic Adjustment Scale[16] are consistent over two testings (Spring, 1979 and Spring, 1980). On both occasions Cal's and Rose's scores were similar and high enough to indicate substantial adjustment on four subscales: Dyadic Consensus, Dyadic Satisfaction, Dyadic Cohesion and Affectional Expression. Cal and Rose share an awareness of each other's evaluation of the relationship; they were not surprised to learn their scores were high and similar on the Spanier scale. They rated their marriage as "very happy" or "extremely happy," and each pledged to do all he/she could to ensure the success of their marriage. Their shared knowledge of their relationship is captured in the following dialogue

from the 1979 interview:

Interviewer: (to Cal and Rose) You're really, really similar in your answers [given during an interview conducted separately with each].

Rose: I'm not surprised.

Cal: I'm not surprised; I'd be surprised if there was any variation [about the job decision]. We both understood where our lines were gonna be drawn. We talked about it before we started looking for work. Mine was the more flexible career. One reason I think there hasn't been a lot of conflict, especially career wise, is that I put her career in front of mine, and I assume=

Rose: =I put his in front of mine.

Cal: In doing that gives a willingness to give in. You're trying to better the other person all the time. If I'm watching out for her sake and she's watching out for mine, it's going to be easier to come to a decision because you're both willing to give.

Rose: I think the best was I've ever heard it defined is that you're both willing to bend over 70% backwards, i.e., meet each other more than half way.

These same sentiments are reiterated a year later in their conversation:

Cal: It seems like we both have a tendency, while sitting talking like this, it seems to me=

Rose: =We put the other person a little bit in front of ourself.

Um
[

Cal: Of course that goes along with the philosophy that the best way to succeed is bend, each of you bend more than fifty percent=

Rose: =Backwards=

Cal: =Yeah. (1980)

Cal and Rose's shared knowledge of their perceived decision making processes is reflected in their descriptions of these processes. These excerpts are subepisodes:

Cal: When something comes up that affects both of us, we normally sit down and talk it out on both sides, back and forth . . . . (1979)

- - - - -

Cal: We threw every possible idea out on the floor. (1979)

- - - - -

Rose: It's about equal; it all depends on what situation it is. In some cases Cal takes a stand, and I'll go along with it because it doesn't much matter to me. In other cases I'll take the stand and we'll go along with me. (1979)

They say they tried to work out a compromise on the conflicting career problem.

Rose: It [the career decision] got to a point, where what we do, and it's what my mom and dad used to do, was sit down and you have a pro list and a con list and you start writing them down. I made out my list and he made out his list . . . . We started eliminating stuff. When we start working on stuff we'll talk, and talk and talk and talk .(1979)

- - - - -

Rose: As far as making the decision we really didn't sit down and talk about it that much back and forth; it was something that just kind of evolved between the two of us in an unspoken way.

Cal: Yeah, it just came to the point where it goes, well, it's February, do you want to go back to New Jersey? And we both knew the answer before the question was even asked. (1980)

- - - - -

Rose: I think we tend to for the most part agree on most things.

Cal: And the points that aren't in agreement are not points that stay buried. Things still are as it was before we got married; if there's a problem, one of us will bring it up very quickly after it surfaces and it gets worked out now; it doesn't stay submerged and turn into a point of contention later on. (1980)

There is some indication from Cal and Rose that Cal tends to overreact initially or to react impulsively and negatively when he is first confronted. This is expressed in the following example:

Rose: Your dad's not gonna take it too well.

Cal: Would you stop sellin' my dad short. You ain't got, he may blow up originally to begin with. He's like, he's like I am, Whaa whaa.

Rose: That's true.

Cal: You've seen him do that. You've seen me do that.

The couple perceives their decision making as democratic, systematic and thoughtful. At times they characterize the process as "evolving" with no special effort on their part, but closer scrutiny of the conversations belies this claim; look especially at the first, second and fourth examples at the beginning of this section. It is possible after time has passed the couple "forgets" how much effort they put into creating a decision.

The discussion of shared knowledge has centered on the couple's perceptions and descriptions of their relationship and decision making process. The study turns now to the conversational form revealed as Cal and Rose talk about a variety of subjects, especially why they decided to stay in California. In this part of the analysis the couple's spontaneous conversations taped in 1979 and 1980 are used in order to determine what structure the conversation takes, and to compare the couple's actual communication behavior with their perceptions of their behavior. In addition the forms in the spontaneous

conversation (1979) and interview or storytelling communication are compared.

First, the couple discuss elements of the career decision in cycles around more mundane talk. The couple's first taped episode (1979) centers on comparative prices of apartments in California and New Jersey. Talk of a party, dinner, and dishwashing comprises the following episodes; then the career discussion suddenly resurfaces and continues through a variety of subepisodes. After a brief exchange about dinner preparation, Cal and Rose pick up the career discussion; this is followed by a transition to metatalk about Cal's typical response to disagreeable information. The career decision quickly reappears. The conversation continues this way for several more minutes; talk about "everyday things" is interspersed with career discussion. Both encounters show this pattern, but it is more prominent in the 1979 tape, probably because that encounter is totally spontaneous.

Second, the conversation serves several functions: information gathering (e.g., "if . . . you just turned it down, do you think there'd be any possibilities we could apply to them later on?"); exploring possible solutions (e.g., "Well ya know I could always rent furniture for two months."); identifying obstacles (e.g., "Rose, I don't know what we're gonna do if they won't allow ya to take a stay."). These functional types of acts are repeated throughout the conversation, information is gathered, constraints are raised, then potential solutions are offered. Interestingly, Cal raises the most obstacles in considering the move to New Jersey, while Rose provides the answers.

Cal: Then what are ya gonna do for settin' up the apartment, take all the stuff I'd be livin' in?

Rose: No.

Cal: Where'd you stay? What would ya do?

Rose: I've been thinking about, thinking about that one. Well, ya know I could always rent furniture for two months.

Cal: I'll bet you have. Either that or we have ta ship all our furniture out. See, also if you go back there I won't be back there to help you find a place or whatever. (1979)

Although Cal does not show unbending commitment to a single solution, he appears to view the move as very difficult. Again these functions are primarily present in the 1979 encounter. In the 1980 encounter they talk about having made the decision democratically, taking each other's needs into consideration.

Rose: And probably Cal would of had to take a cut in pay going back East.

- - - - -

Cal: She came up with a job that is turning out to be very frustrating in some ways, but I think in the long run it's going to come out to be very, very beneficial.

- - - - -

Rose: I think that was another thing that influenced my decision not to go back to New Jersey is that the job that Cal has now really has a lot of potential behind it.

- - - - -

Cal: But at the same time the job back in New Jersey, yes they would have tried to get her to publish, but maybe one paper. . . . Where now she's already coauthored three papers and chances are by the time she's done with the project she will have been, had her name on at least twenty papers.

They intersperse concern for the other with concern for their own needs as illustrated by these examples:

Rose: Also I did find a job [in California] that I really liked . . . . I wanted something that had responsibility where I was considered a researcher . . . and really be a contributing part to the research project and I was able to land that type of job here. (1980)

- - - - -

Cal: There's also another point on that, I don't know if it affected her, but it did affect my decision, or my quote "willingness" to go back to New Jersey, is the job that I ended up getting . . . happened to be a lot more, a lot more than I really originally thought it was going to be . . . . It seems that they are willing to give me as much responsibility as I want to take and I have absolutely nobody except my manager telling me what to do. (1980)

Finally, they show concern for their relationship in reconstructing their decision making; note the use of "we" in these examples:

Cal: Also the fact that if we were back East we just couldn't see 'em. Um, that's something we really enjoy as there is very close family ties between both sides of the family . . . . (1980)

- - - - -

Rose: [in New Jersey] we would not be in as good a position [financially] as we are out here. (1980)

- - - -

Rose: I'm really not willing to jeopardize two good jobs for the possibility of one good job. Sure I'm looking at this as a unit made up of two people. Ah, I guess that's what marriage means, etc., etc. But in the long run you try to maximize your total situation and I think by staying in California we have maximized our total situation. (1980)

Cal and Rose indicated in their discussion of the way they think they make decisions that they "bend over backward" to more than meet each other halfway. In this section I provided examples showing they feel strongly that they considered the other's needs and interests as well as their own and those of the relationship in making their important career decision. The transcript of their actual decision making reveals that the couple tried to balance both

their needs in reaching a decision, but Cal expressed reluctance to make the move. He was strongly opposed at first ("No, we're not going to New Jersey.") and later after softening ("I didn't know that you wanted to come back to California, possibly.") still continued to raise obstacles to the move, perhaps in an attempt to "control" the decision.

Third, topics and especially subtopics shift continually. Multiple subepisodes constitute episodes, and multiple episodes comprise both encounters. A lengthy episode (1979) involving the career decision, moves through subtopics concerning the possible postponement of Rose's starting the New Jersey job, togetherness versus separation, furnishing an apartment, and finding an apartment. They both change topics, but Cal does much more frequently than Rose, again perhaps as a form of control.

Fourth, interruptions occur in both the 1979 and 1980 encounters, and take different forms in each. In the 1979 transcript interruptions appear to be bids to speak.

Rose: I know, but that was a double size cone, so you had a regular eight ounce thing for lunch.
Cal: [ ] for lunch, only one eight ounce thing for lunch.

I'm sorry=
[ ]
Rose: Well, ahh

Cal: =I need keeping=
[ ]
Rose: You eat

Cal: =more than that, and I will continue to you, keep eating more than that. (1979)

- - - - -

Cal: Are we gonna tell 'em that, the, the truth or
[ ]
Rose: I'm tellin' my mom the truth. . . .(1979)

In the 1980 transcript interruptions usually involve one partner's completing the other's sentence. This form is more characteristic of story-telling to a third party, where the partners have apparently been over the ground before. They are able to anticipate the development of the story, even to the precise choice of words.

Cal: They don't really judge people out here by that. Whereas I've heard stories of back East=

Rose: =Where you fit into a niche or forget it. (1980)

- - - - -

Cal: Ah, we have a=

Rose: =Chewed Toyota, anyway=

Cal: =But the Courier is in good condition . . . . (1980)

- - - - -

Cal: Although I said yes if you make the decision we'll go back to New Jersey.

Rose: [ ] It wasn't a positive, "yes," it was a "well, yes I'll go"=

Cal: =If I have to"=

Rose: =If I have to, with this great big "B-U-T" in it.

Cal: There wasn't any "but" in it; I would have gone if you'd of decided . . . . (1980)

The couple collaborates in presenting a joint picture of their reasons for staying in California. Most of their storytelling is directed to this topic. There are occasional cracks or nicks in the well-drawn picture, as evident in the last example above. Rose momentarily suggests that Cal might have been unwilling to go east, but Cal denies it, and reaffirms his willingness to have gone ("I would have gone if you'd of decided."). Rose "falls in line" by presenting another reason why the move to New Jersey might have been undesirable, in her subsequent speech act ("Oh, wait a minute, I know one other

thing that did definitely influence my decision . . . .").

Another conversational structure that also appears to signal the couple's intense collaboration in reconstructing their rationale for staying in California is frequently recurring affirmation/confirmation in the 1980 encounter. Affirmation generally takes the form of "yeah," or "that's true," following a partner's speech act. Again, the form seems to be a normal part of the conjoint storytelling in this relationship. Of course, not all couples are able to pepper their stories with 17% overt, agreeing responses, as Cal and Rose do. Previous research on family communication has shown that pathological families have more disconfirming and fewer confirming responses than "normal" families but has not identified a baseline of occurrence of such speech structures. I can only speculate that the 17% incidence of affirmation in Cal and Rose's conversation is high. It is also evident that disconfirming behavior is almost nil.[17] Thus, the presence of affirmation and absence of disconfirmation underline the couple's reconstruction of the logic of their decision. It is much less frequent in their spontaneous conversation in the 1979 encounter.

Sixth, a topic-extension form is also used frequently throughout the 1980 encounter. Cal or Rose raise a topic and the other extends the topic, often matching his/her partner's speech act length. For example, in one episode concerning the career decision Cal introduces this line of reasoning,

Cal: A key point that I think caused the decision was the face of inflation, and a major recession seemed to be in the coming=

Rose: =And the world situation in general. (1980)

Cal elaborates with a lengthy (172 word) speech, but subtly changes the subtopic in the last sentence--"I don't know if I would've enjoyed going back East. I think it's a little too stuffy for me right now." Rose reciprocates with a (188 word) speech about the eastern humidity and harsh

weather, thus extending Cal's final remark (or constituting the weather topic; "stuffy" could have referred to lifestyle). Cal extends Rose's discussion of the weather, and Rose makes one final short remark about ice before changing to a new subtopic. This example characterizes the topic-extension form throughout the 1980 encounter; the form is less evident in the 1979 transcript. There are also a few notable exceptions to this norm in the 1980 transcript. In one, Cal and Rose are talking about Rose's job; Rose introduces a slight shift and Cal closes off the discussion abruptly:

Rose: Cal is our consultant; I am the one who interfaces with Cal, and in some ways that makes me Cal's boss in this.

Cal: I don't take orders very well though.

Rose: No, he doesn't. In some ways it's a very uncomfortable position having to interface in that capacity with your husband.

Cal: Well, this is getting a little off the subject . . . . (1980)

The other exceptions to the topic-extension norm occur during brief argumentative exchanges (discussed below).

A seventh point concerning the conversational structure is that topic shifts are smooth and flowing in their storytelling. New topics and subtopics are almost always related to the preceding topic, or the preceding topic is "acknowledged" before the shift takes place in the 1980 encounter. For example, Cal and Rose have been talking about their parents; the conversation seems to be winding down with Cal's remark:

Cal: They just have very different outlooks on life; they do things much differently.

Rose: Yeah, um, [acknowledgement] I think another thing [ties to previous conversation] that influenced my decision . . . . (1980)

In another example, Cal and Rose have been talking about Cal's job; she thinks their decision has been good for him and concludes by saying:

Rose: Um, I may have not maximized my own personal situation, but um at least career-wise, however, in the long run, on a total, total look at it all, I think we are ahead. (1980)

Cal's next speech act ties in to Rose's with "also" and picks up the related topic of Rose's job:

Cal: There's also something here that I don't know what Rose feels, but for six months that she's been working this job . . . . (1980)

Few transitions are awkward or abrupt with the exception of the example above, "Well, this is getting a little off the subject . . . ."

The smooth topic shifts and topic-extension form also appear to support the assessment that Cal and Rose had carefully (though not necessarily deliberately) created a joint reality to explain their career decision. These forms do not appear as frequently in the 1979 transcript. The earlier encounter is characterized by some topic-extension, but there is actually little sustained topic development. Shifts are rather abrupt with few verbal signals given, partly because instructions for dinner preparation and table setting are interjected into other topics. Cal and Rose don't seem to mind the abrupt changes, at least they are never mentioned, and don't appear to disrupt the flow of conversation.

The couple rarely "fights" in the encounters; however, the form of their arguments poses an interesting comparison to their more typical structure. In this example from the 1980 encounter they are discussing Cal's TV watching:

Rose: I mean I can tolerate having a stereo on in the background, but to have a TV blaring at me for attention just drives me crazy. And Cal says, "Well, why don't you ignore it." I cannot ignore something babbling!

Cal: Well, see she's married to something that babbles, so there's that.

What I find though is the fact that I get home and my mind has been going on problem after problem and I find it's very relaxing, and yes, I vegetate in front of the=

Rose: He does.

=[[ ]

Cal: Television set; I find it totaling relaxing.

Rose: He looks like a dumbbell.

Cal: Rose has changed my attitudes on TV quite a bit and I assume it's gonna continue.

Rose: It's like we made a pact. Before he just came in and turned the TV on and sat in front of it and I'd say, "Well, what are you watching?" "I don't know."

Cal: I never did it that way.

Rose: It's impossible to talk to him and carry on a conversation when the television is on.

Cal: It's not that bad.

Rose: Well, it's almost that bad.

[ ]

Cal: No, it's not.

Rose: At any rate, it's like I'm vying for attention; I guess in some ways I feel like Cal holds the TV above me--sometimes. And that's when it gets frustrating, is when he's just sitting there watching just to watch TV. Not to watch a show, I can handle it when he's sitting there watching M.A.S.H., or really is sitting down to watch a TV show that he wants to watch. But just to watch for the sake of watching it drives me crazy.

Cal: That's something that I've never understood. Is, yes, I was raised with the television set on, all the time and you weren't, but you always come across the fact that the television set is threatening you. And that I hold a television set higher than you . . . .

Note the interruptions in lines 7 and 17; unlike most previous interruptions in the 1980 encounter, they do not complete the partner's speech act. Line 7 is agreement with the preceding remark, but that remark, "I vegetate in front of the" is derogatory to the speaker. Much of the exchange is characterized by disagreement; lines 13-17 disagree with the previous.

A second example shows similar form:

Cal: And when the six of us used to get together and all six of us would sit and talk. And now the three girls go talk about one thing=

Rose: =Girls, note girls, it is=

Cal: =Rose, that's not, you- can- not- lay- that on me!
[ ]
Rose: I'm not.
[
Cal: Now doggone it.
[ ]
Rose: I'm not=

Cal: =I'm as much pushing for women's rights as everything wrong=
[ ]
Rose: Hey!

Cal: =By using the name GIRLS= (1980)

Almost every speech act is an interruption that reaffirms the speaker's position and disrupts the conversational flow. Again the exchange is a series of disagreements. A few more "chinks in the armor?"

Cal and Rose maintain that their arguments are rare and mild when they occur. Following the first argument above, they metacommunicate about their "fight" style, reaffirming their previously described commitment to compromise:

Cal: Sometimes she would bitch at me about having the television set on and I'm not talking about yelling and screaming and jumping up and down. It's not like that.

Rose: This is, conversation you're listening to right now, that we've just gone through, is probably as heated as we ever get about it.

Cal: Yeah, this is a typical argument.

Rose: Yeah.

Cal: But we've worked it out. In other words, I will go to turn the television set on and look over at Rose and she's got this totally exasperated look on her face=

Rose: =Of, "Oh, God, no, not again."

Cal: Or, she will go to turn the television set off and look at me and I will have a totally exasperated look on my face.

Rose: On the other hand, sometimes I just walked to the other room and get a book.

Cal: And sometimes I just shut up and she turns it off and we sit in silence for a while.

Rose: That doesn't happen very often.

Cal: No.

Rose: At all. All in all, it works pretty well. I think it's just getting used to the fact that we don't have any time to ourselves in the middle of the day, like we tended to have when we were in school. ('980)

Again, Cal and Rose seem intent on painting a picture of harmony. The occasional "slips," however, suggest a fuller picture, one in which disharmony and disagreement occur, and in which contrary to their claim to always meet each other more than halfway, Rose makes a number of important concessions to Cal and then collaborates with him in maintaining their picture of mutual, equal compromise. Note the force of Cal's influence in the "girls" example above. Cal says in emphatic staccato voice, "you- can- not- lay- that on me!" And Rose attempts to defuse the emotion with, "I'm not," and "hey." She concludes the discussion with this remark, "Hey, I'm not getting down on Roger

on that, but that's typical. I wasn't even getting on Roger for that one. What I was getting at was the girls go off their way and the boys go off their way" (emphasis mine).

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Cal and Rose are part of a social group in which partners try to coordinate family and career interests and demands. In facing a crucial career decision the couple experienced a relational strain, and through their decision making process and later reconstruction of events, they give us a glimpse of the complex means by which their reality is created and marital adjustment sustained.

The first research question addressed in this study--does the couple's description and perceived shared knowledge of their relationship and decision making correspond to their observed decision making form--must be answered equivocally, yes and no. The couple perceive themselves to be happily married and well-adjusted; their Adjustment Scale scores corroborate this perception, and their conversation does not suggest otherwise. Thus the forms of data show congruence on relational adjustment.

In terms of their decision making, they report that they value compromise and each bends over more than halfway in meeting the other, that they put each other's needs first, and did so in making their career decision. The spontaneous conversation, however, demonstrates stronger influence being exercised by Cal. He initially refuses to move east, then raises a series of obstacles to the move which may eventually have "worn down" his partner. He also shows a tendency to control in his many topic shifts and his quickness and force in challenging Rose when he disagrees. She on the other hand supports his "one-up" position by backing down, and by joining him in a collaborative effort to deny any relational inequity and create a picture of idealized symmetry.

In exploring further the inconsistencies in the data, it was found that at times their descriptions are contradictory; at one point Rose says they made pro and con lists and talked and talked. In another place they indicate the career decision "evolved" without much overt effort. One fact appears more clearly--they have gone over, and agreed upon the arguments they reconstruct for others (and probably themselves) in order to explain their career decision. Certain forms in their storytelling, such as affirming, completing each other's speech acts, smooth topic shifts, and much topic-extension, require agreement and possibly prior recounting of the same arguments for their coordination. These forms are not evident to nearly as extensive a degree in the earlier, spontaneous encounter.

Some of the most compelling reasons proposed by the couple for their decision involve institutional constraints--money, family, career and life-style considerations. The second research question asks--what institutional constraints emerge from the couple's spontaneous conversation; how do these compare with those the couple says are/were important considerations? In recounting their decision making, Cal and Rose mention each of these constraints as major motivating factors. They concluded from dealing with these constraints that greater financial reward, closeness to family and career opportunities exist in the West than East, and a more attractive lifestyle does also in their view.

In their spontaneous decision making they do raise many of these same concerns and attempt to address them, or rather Cal raises the obstacles and Rose suggests solutions. Where will she live; what furniture will she use; how much are apartments; what will they tell their parents; how will he find a job; are there opportunities for them to further their education; these are all questions raised by Cal. Rose has simple, tentative answers that

somewhere along the way were judged unworkable, as the couple explain in their later recounting.

Thus one finds some interesting contradictions, perhaps paradoxes posed by this "well-adjusted" couple when looking at what they do and what they say they do. These seem to be different, yet they both concur in what they say they do.

They explicate a series of ideals--the ideal marriage is harmonious, each partner gives to the other and puts the other before him/herself; there is little conflict or disagreement, and finally, the partners are equals. Cal and Rose appear to diverge from their own ideal. Cal dominates; he is quick to express opinion and displeasure; Rose gives in.

Little sparks of conflict simmering beneath the surface ignite from time to time, illuminating areas of tension in the relationship. Rose reminds Cal that he may have been willing to move east in theory only; Cal retorts that he would have gone if she would have decided to go; Rose changes the subject. Rose complains about Cal's vegetating in front of the T.V., that he sometimes puts the tube before her; Cal says he needs the distraction; Rose reads a book. Rose chides Cal for calling her friends, "girls"; Cal gets heated; Rose placates. The partners may be equals in many respects, yet Cal appears to exercise more control in their communication.

Cal and Rose seem oblivious to the contradictory data. They describe themselves as meeting their ideals, and as very happy. Apparently the significant factor in their happiness is their coinciding perceptions of ideals and events. Cal "helps" Rose to see things his way; he periodically reminds her of their reality when she strays, and Rose seems willing to concur with Cal, perhaps because there is little she can do or might want to do to alter their situation. In the classic sense, they are reducing dissonance and seeing the positive in their situation, especially in convincing themselves, family and

friends of the wisdom of their career decision.

The couple create their own reality of their relationship in Berger and Kellner's terms.[18] Their perceptions of their relationship and decision making are very real to them, and apparently satisfying. They believe they have tried to maximize the situation for both of them. It's unclear whether this was in fact an a priori consideration or a post hoc rationalization.

The findings prompt some intriguing questions: How does one account for such a discrepancy between behavior and participants' perceptions of that behavior; and second, what are the implications of this discrepancy for intimate couples? The answers can only be speculative, but are explored here.

Several social science theories may be proferred in explanation for the couple's behavior. Cal may have simply "forced" the decision in the direction he wished--he behaved persuasively and convinced Rose. Dissonance or balance theories suggest Rose may have been trying to bring her perceptions into agreement with Cal's. He in turn may have needed to reduce guilt, to believe she, indeed, had equal input into their decision, and encouraged her to share that view.

On the other hand Rose may have subtly pushed Cal to take charge. At one point in the interview she says that she "needs Cal to be successful"; she would never want to be the sole breadwinner, but Cal would. Cal shares this view, yet they also need to perceive themselves as equals. In their reality they have it both ways--Cal takes the lead in making decisions, and they view themselves as having equal say. Social exchange theory may inform this notion. The couple may view the male as possessing higher status, as naturally entitled to more weight, more say, in decision making. She receives equal gratification from giving lesser input and perceives them as equal. His

smaller accomodations may be perceived as equal to her greater accomodations because of his accorded higher status.

Another explanation for the incongruence between behavior and perceptions is that it is a normal occurrence. Jules Henry, noted psychiatrist, anthropologist and educator, observes that, "we all live every day by sham, anyone who fights against it makes life unbearable."[19] Henry sees sham when a person withholds information, "while implying that the other person should act as if he had it all,"[20] or "in giving false information while expecting the other person to act as if the information were true."[21] Through sham one derives advantage, but sham is difficult to maintain without the cooperation of the other. There is good sham and bad sham, analogous to white and black lies; "white sham helps society get its business done."[22]

Sham stems from many factors, alone or in combination, such as "depression, hostility, . . . anxiety, feeling of helplessness, confusion, desire to exploit, lack of confidence in being believed, need to maintain appearances" and "self-deception."[23] We often believe that by withholding information or giving false information we are saving the other from harm, or doing the other good. Ultimately, Henry would like to see a world free of sham, but until society evolves to that point, sham is a necessary evil.

Berger and Kellner reinforce Henry's ideas by suggesting that the marriage partners cooperate to create a new reality. Marriage is a "nomic rupture" requiring the correlation of the partners' definitions of reality and of each other. The new reality in turn "acts back" upon the partners in a dialectic between person and reality.[24]

Another way to look at this situation is to apply Gregory Bateson's notion of "play." He says an animal knows not to respond defensively to certain attacking behaviors by another, because the other signals, "this is

play." By the same token a couple may be "playing" while signalling, "this is real."[25] This notion is echoed in the concepts of family myth,[26] and "pseudomutuality."[27]

Of course these explanations are only preliminary and speculative, but they suggest an interesting view of intimate relationships and some implications for the analysis of, and intervention in, such relationships.

First, in studying couples or dyads we often either investigate what they do (e.g., conversation analysis) or what they say they do (e.g., self-report data analysis) and make inferences about the relationship. In light of this study, perhaps we must make more attempts to use multiple approaches to gathering data in order to create a fuller picture. At least we should acknowledge the perspective from which our data are collected and the significance this has for interpreting the results.

Second, Cal and Rose, from all indices, are happily married. This suggests that some distortion of events (Henry's sham) may not be harmful. Perhaps "openness" and honesty are poor predictors of relational satisfaction; what matters are the partners' concordant perceptions of themselves and their relationship, whether distorted or not. There is probably a limit to the degree of distortion which partners can accomodate, but evidence suggests the latitude may be quite large; consider the battered wife, who in collusion with her husband, perceives that she instigates and deserves the abuse, and will not leave the relationship.

Many questions remain unanswered: what longterm effects does sham have on the relationship; what degree of distortion is acceptable; what other variables impact on the acceptability/nonacceptability of sham? These are certainly preliminary questions and issues, but answers will lead to increased understanding of relationships.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Special thanks to Patricia Smith for her assistance in gathering and preparing data. This study was supported in part by a Academic Senate Research Grant and a Regents' Fellowship.

[2]Outcome assessment studies seek to identify one participant as the winner; see J. Turk and N. Bell, "Measuring Power in Families." Journal of Marriage and the Family, 34 (1972), 215-232.

[3]Bargaining and negotiation studies sometimes employ game theory analysis, and focus upon strategies used to achieve a desired outcome (win-loss); see J. Rubin and B. Brown, The Social Psychology of Bargaining and Negotiation, (New York: Academic Press, 1975).

[4]Game theory uses a laboratory setting and puts paired subjects through a series of choices which either reward or penalize Ss and are designed, depending on the investigator's purposes, to maximize one S's gain at the other's expense, or to maximize gain versus loss for both participants. These studies criticized as too contrived and controlled, have nonetheless yielded interesting insights into the negotiation process; game theorists, for example, have found that pre-game discussions of how to play the game may increase cooperation; see G. Miller and T. Steinfatt, "Communication in Game Theoretic Models of Conflict," in Perspectives on Communication in Social Conflict, eds. G. Miller and H. Simons (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974).

[5]Interaction analyses, newer than the other approaches, instead of examining decision making from an outcome perspective, focus upon the participants' sequence of communication. Interaction analysts describe and explain how

people move from topic initiation through discussion to decision by recording, transcribing, and categorizing decision making. The frequencies of occurrence of categories are counted and in some cases a stochastic analysis is conducted to determine dependencies among categorized messages in the conversational sequence. Research from this perspective has provided valuable information on the way small groups deal with conflict, see D. Ellis and B. A. Fisher, "Phases of Conflict in Small Group Development: A Markov Analysis," Human Communication Research, 1 (1975), 195-212; the differences in the processes of cooperative and competitive group conflict, see D. Krueger, "Competitive and Cooperative Decision-making Groups: An Analysis of Differences and Communication Patterns," Communication Research, 7 (1980) 457-478; couples' negotiation of control, see F. Millar and E. Rogers, "A Relational Approach to Interpersonal Communication," in Explorations in Interpersonal Communication, ed. G. Miller (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1976); and couples' conflict resolution, see H. Raush, W. Barry, R. Hertel and M. Swain, Communication, Conflict and Marriage (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1974).

[6] P. Rabinow and W. Sullivan, Interpretive Social Science (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 5.

[7] Discussions of qualitative conversation analysis are included in T. Frentz and T. Farrell, "Language Action: A Paradigm for Communication," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, 62 (1976), 333-349; H. Garfinkel, "Studies in the Routine Grounds of Everyday Activities," ed. D. Sudnow, Studies in Social Interaction (New York: Free Press, 1972); D. Hymes, Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1974); W. Labov, "Rules for Rituals," ed. D. Sudnow, Studies in Social Interaction (New York: Free Press, 1972); E. Litton-Hawes, "A Foundation

for the Study of Everyday Talk," Communication Quarterly, 25 (1977), 2-11; J. Searle, "What is a Speech Act?" ed. P. Giglioli, Language and Social Context (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1972).

[8]Frentz and Farrell.

[9]In this lengthy interpretive type of analysis, looking at one couple, a single case, is important; it provides a "slice of life" which may increase our awareness of the issues and functions of the group in the larger society; see, for example, R. Rapoport and R. N. Rapoport, Dual-career Families Re-examined (London: Martin Robinson, 1976) p. 17.

[10]Rapoport and Rapoport define career as a job requiring a high level of commitment and with a continuing developmental character. The dual-career lifestyle in which both marital partners pursue careers is a relatively new pattern. For more extensive discussion of dual-career marriage see L. Holmstrom, The Two-career Family (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1972); J. Hunt and L. Hunt, "Dilemmas and Contradictions of Status: The Case of the Dual-career Family," Social Problems, 24 (1977), 407-416; R. Rapoport and R. N. Rapoport, "The Dual-career Family: A Variant Pattern and Social Change," Human Relations, 22 (1969), 3-30; "Further Considerations on the Dual-career Family," Human Relations, 24 (1971), 519-533; Dual-career Families Re-examined (London: Martin Robinson, 1976).

[11]Frentz and Farrell.

[12]J. Forgas, Social Episodes (New York: Academic Press, 1979) p. 15.

[13]This example from Cal and Rose's conversation illustrates topic shifts and thus episodes:

Cal: You know, Rose--from the looks of apartments up in the Bay Area, we could find a very nice one for 325 or 350.

Rose: You think so?

Cal: Ya, look at this.

Rose: That's probably cheaper than New Jersey.

Cal: 235 to 375.

Rose: One bedroom and one bathroom went from 3 to 235; 235's the best.

Cal: Ya, but, through that, here's two to three bedrooms 360 to 214. In other words, we'll be paying 350 to 400.

Rose: [ah, 350 to 400. Right what we figured. Uhmm, hmm.

Cal: You're not planning on using any hard liquor at this party are ya?

Rose: I am not. (1979)

In lines 1-11 the couple is discussing the cost of apartments; at line 12 the conversation shifts to the party the couple is planning. Rose's "uhm, hmm" in response to Cal's preceding statement appears to end the episode when juxtaposed with Cal's opening of a new topic: "You're not planning on using any hard liquor at this party are ya?"

Slight changes of thought or idea are part of a single episode provided the general thrust of the conversation is still toward one single overriding topic. For example, in the first episode presented above, the couple discusses apartments in the Bay area (lines 1-4) and in New Jersey (lines 5-6), but the thrust of the conversation is apartment costs in general. Thus this conversation constitutes a single episode.

[14]Since a good deal of a normal couple's communication is to a third party this is a legitimate, even desirable form for the data to take. Much can be revealed through a couple's joint responses to questions; the nature of this

talk is considered indexical of the relationship. See P. Watzlawick, "A Structured Family Interview," Family Process, 5 (1966), 256-271.

[15]The notation used in the transcribed excerpts is based on the work of Gail Jefferson and is fully described in J. Schenkein, ed., Studies in the Organization of Conversational Interaction (San Francisco: Academic Press, 1978). The symbol ([ ) indicates overlapping utterances, ([[ ) shows simultaneous utterances, and a right hand bracket ( ]) shows where the overlap stops; contiguous utterances with no interval between are linked with equal signs (=). A dashed line (- - - - -) indicates a break in the dialogue.

[16]G. Spanier, "Measuring Dyadic Adjustment: New Scales for Assessing the Quality of Marriage and Similar Dyads," Journal of Marriage and the Family, 38 (1976), 15-28.

[17]See R. Laing, The Politics of the Family (New York: Random House, 1969); E. Mishler and N. Waxler, Interaction in Families (New York: John Wiley, 1968).

[18]P. Berger and H. Kellner, "Marriage and the Construction of Reality," eds. D. Brissett and C. Edgley, Life as Theater (Chicago: Aldine, 1975).

[19]J. Henry, On Sham, Vulnerability and Other Forms of Self-destruction (New York: Random House, 1957), p. 121.

[20]Ibid., p. 123.

[21]Ibid., pp. 123-124.

[22]Ibid., p. 124.

[23]Ibid., pp. 122-123.

[24]Berger and Kellner, p. 225.

[25]G. Bateson, Steps to an Ecology of Mind (New York: Ballantine, 1972).

[26]A. Ferreira, "Family Myths," eds. P. Watzlawick and J. Weakland, The Interactional View (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977).

[27]L. Wynne, I. Ryckoff, J. Day, and S. Hirsch, "Pseudomutuality in the Family Relations of Schizophrenics," Psychiatry, 21 (1958), 205-220.